



# I Am Beautiful

Volume 3



A Survival Resource

Created by and for Women Survivors of Abuse



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*"Life is a journey and a spiritual unfolding is its purpose."*



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## With Gratitude

We are very grateful to all the women in prisons across the country who opened their hearts and shared their experiences of sadness and joy through their writing and art. Their willingness to share is truly courageous, given all that they have survived. This book represents their gift to the many other women across the country who are traveling with them on the unfolding journey of life.



## Our Logo

The *Rose* is the logo for this project, inspired by the words of a woman who contributed to Volume One:

*"Life is a journey and a spiritual unfolding is its purpose."*

## The Cover Art

We are very grateful to friend and photographer *Calvin Cornelius* ([www.calvinwildphotography.com](http://www.calvinwildphotography.com)) for his dedicated and excellent work in producing the cover photograph for this book. Thanks also to *Ratarah* who stood patiently for hours while she was being photographed for this project. The photographing session took place in Douglas County Jail, Ava, Missouri, and we are grateful to *Sergeant Vernon Johnson* and staff for providing access to the jail.

## Introduction

### *LISTEN...*

Our voices...of wisdom, maternal ache, regret, abuse called us to catharsis.  
Strong voices...our whispered shouts, stronger than echoes called us to unite.  
Loving voices...healing and healthy, peace-filled in grace, encouraging our sisters called us to action.

Lately, I've been musing over the notion that all relationships are about letting go. This is poignantly true in parenting. I was thinking about that winter when my boy Ben learned to drive our old stick shift Hyundai in the icy Pick n' Save parking lot after dark.. As he got the feel of the clutch, veered around light poles and recovered the skids from too-fast turns, I realized this kid would be plenty skilled as a driver but also that he would now seek ways to speed away, and I let him. How could I control that anyway?

Clearly, I'm not the first with this awareness. Among my favorite Gospel stories is John's account of the wedding at Cana, Jesus' first miracle which began his three year ministry and ultimately led to his persecution, agonizing torture and death to secure our salvation. When the wine ran out, Jesus hesitated. *"My hour has not yet come,"* he told his mother; however, Mary knew it was, indeed, time and she told the waiters, *"Do whatever he tells you."* When Jesus blessed the water, he knew he was on the cusp of this new beginning, but so did his mom. Yet, Mary loved God completely, and she swallowed that ache and let her son go.

Expand this love to all our relationships--letting go brings insights that deepen our connection to one another and our Lord. This is a deliberate and personal choice that has little to do with incarceration. Abandoning our negative relationships with drugs, alcohol, sex, gambling brings healing. Rising against our anger, pain, loss, regret renews joy. The writings and art in this volume reflect this awareness--letting go of mere catharsis and moving towards the greater love of helping other women heal.

There is freedom in prison for these women who have opened their hearts to letting go. For some, that freedom is new appreciation for family, for others it is in valuing education or sobriety. Others let go of a disparaging self-image; many women are freed by the calm that comes from God's sheltering love and mercy. All are conscious choices reflected in strong voices.

Peace,  
*Jill Haberman*

## EXCERPTS

*Geneva Phillips*

Deep moving colors  
Gypsy scarves by firelight  
This is how you see me;  
This is how I know myself.

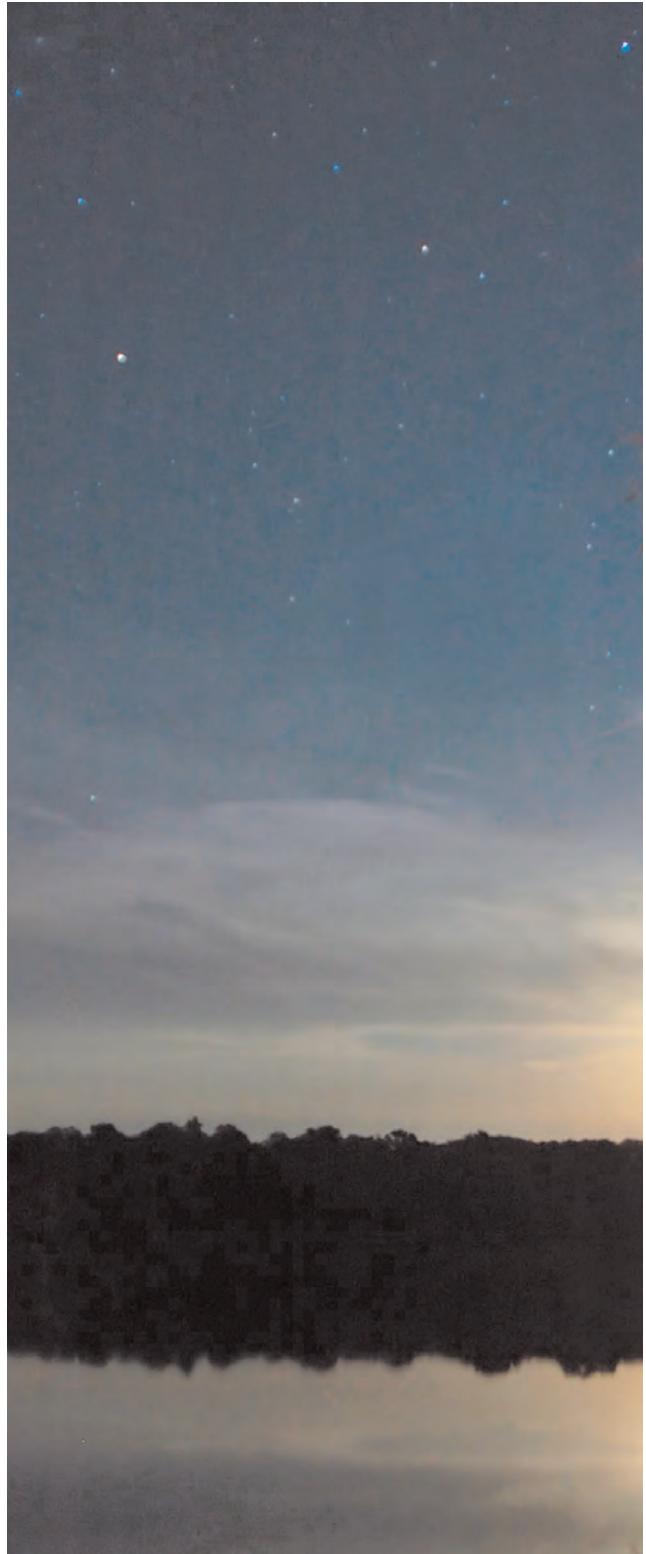
Stars flashing bright  
before her eyes  
blackening now, under fists  
scars on her face, her arms, her wrists

tears don't cut no ice here, baby  
she cleans up her own blood  
broken glass  
bloody sheets  
hands full of hair  
a handful of minutes  
un-erasable  
the tape plays through again.

Remember when! And then!  
Where ghost hands  
touched places  
too alive  
to be memory;  
one side of sanity  
or the other  
often shines in her wide eyes.

I don't mind the scars  
I count them like stars  
scatter them like tears...  
throughout these last years

I don't fear the future  
but I still mourn the past--  
I swallow both the pain and pride  
And they still cut like glass.



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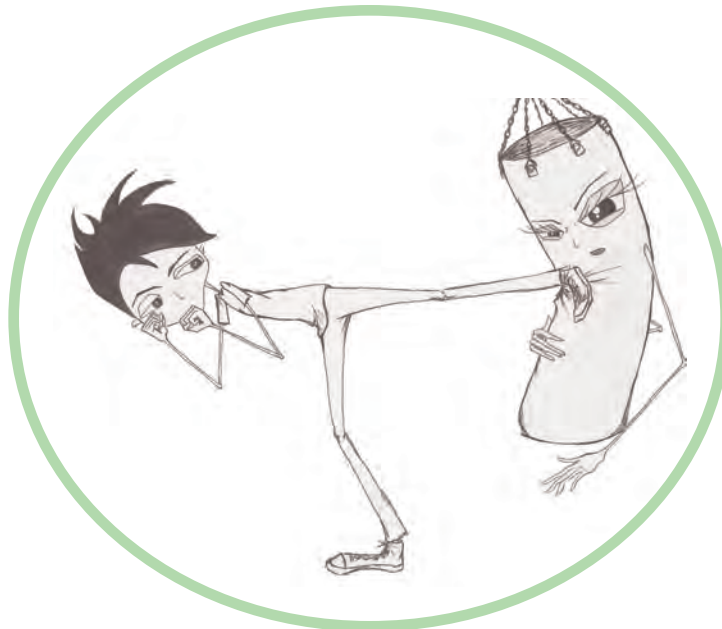
## UNREAL

*Krystal Sade*

Unreal is how it feels when I don't want to believe the truth...  
Unreal is what I think when I don't know why or who...it's the reality  
that gets me and I don't understand why...

Unreal is when everything feels like I'm day dreaming...  
Somebody please wake me up; I know it has no meaning...  
Like the flowers, the trees the birds, the bees...Ya'll know what I mean?  
It makes me want to scream "So Unreal!!" I just sit here and drone off into space...  
Where would I be if I didn't catch such a serious case???

This shit just seems so unreal! To the point when my wounds  
are open and don't want to heal...I wish I had a punching bag to hit,  
kick and punch whenever I get pissed off or mad! But I don't so,  
I control my anger by writing...And I stay in my room as much as I can  
so I don't end up fighting. It's just so unreal!  
But you have to play the cards that life deals...So I sit back and pretend  
I'm somewhere else because when reality is sealed,  
it just feels so  
unreal!!



Stock Art



## LIVING IN A WORLD OF UNRIGHTEOUS KINGS

*Barbara*

What does this really mean?  
Not being able to pray,  
not thanking God for this day.  
Not being able to love the abused  
or the suffering or the needy  
for they seem to have been misused.

Living in a world of unrighteous kings:  
it's like you understand what  
love really means.  
It's not being able to write a report;  
it's being able to reach out to others who lost their hope,  
and it's constantly needing to pray  
and ask God to forgive you  
because we all make mistakes.



## SCAR TISSUE

*Kerri*

I look into the mirror only to see reminders of all the times he's hurt me.  
A scar above my eye from when he bashed my head into the door frame--  
my skin split and the blood rushed down.  
My reflection would never be the same.

What about the time he pushed me from a moving car?  
My arms and legs are covered with those scars.  
The small scar on my neck when he held the knife at my throat?  
He just stood there laughing and started to gloat.

My scars are quite beautiful you see  
because scars can't form on something that's dead--  
only on something alive and full of breath.  
Now I realize the freedom that survival brings  
These scars are symbols that say, "I'm alive!"  
after all those times that I could have died.

He tried to take me down and he tried to take me out  
but now I understand what these scars are about.  
These scars on my face, arms, legs, feet  
show that no matter what, I couldn't be beat.

My features are delicate  
my scars make them elegant  
I am much stronger than I appear.  
For today, I am living my life  
without fear.



Stock Photo



## UNFORTUNATE

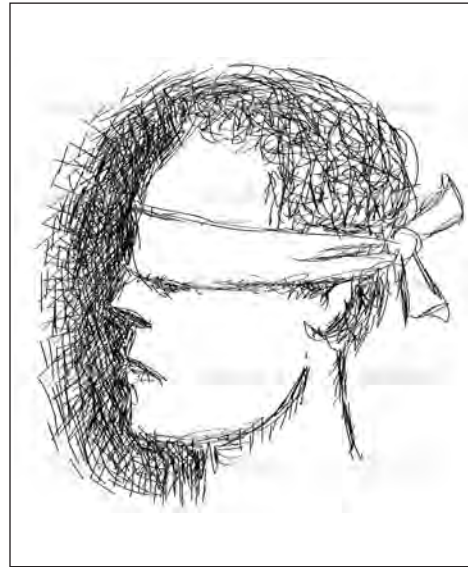
*Jewel*

How unfortunate  
that our past cannot be undone;  
to think I'd almost given up  
and that it almost won.

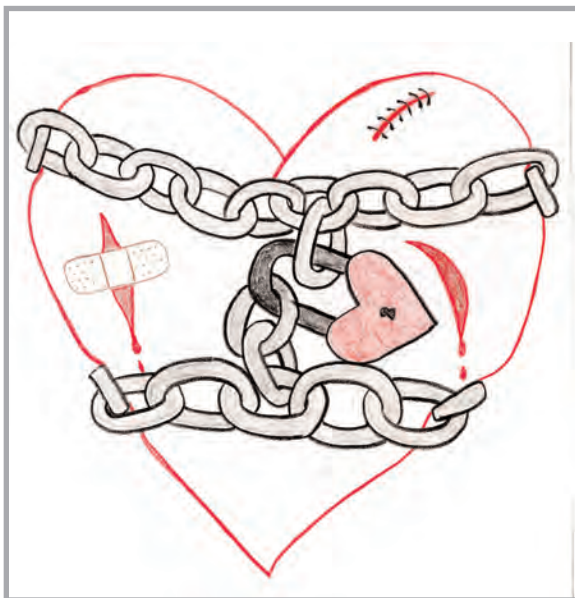
How unfortunate  
that I sit here behind this wall  
self and sanity deprived  
thought I'd lost it all.

How unfortunate  
that nobody could possible see  
that nobody could compare themselves  
to the things that had happened to me.

How unfortunate  
that I hadn't seen it before  
that I wasn't yet strong enough to fight  
that I was too blind to see--  
what today has saved my life.



Stock Art



Tracy Yennie

## HANDLE IT WITH CARE

*Tracy*

Here's my delicate heart,  
scarred, shackled and chained.  
After being broken so many times  
this is how it has remained.  
I need to find someone who will just love  
me for being me  
--someone who's determined enough  
to take the time to find the key.  
So don't make any promises  
if you're not going to be there,  
and if you want to touch my heart,  
please handle it with care.

## LIFE SENTENCE

*Pamela*

The minutes turn into hours; the hours turn into days; the days into weeks...months...years...

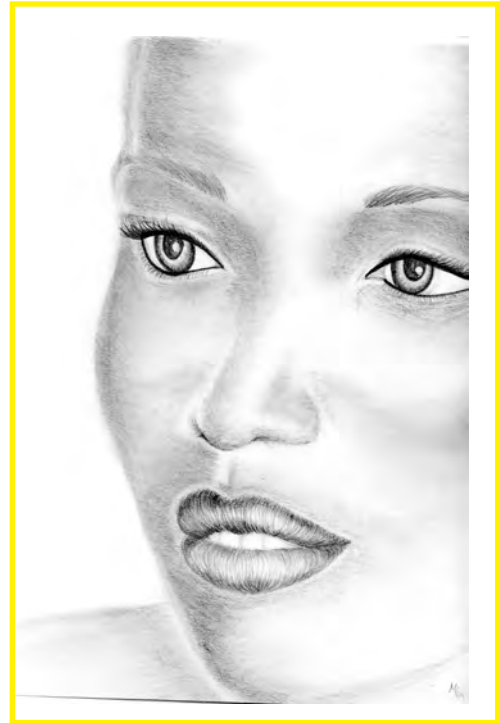
The years were seasons that came and ran together with no visual change or emotion that I could see or feel...15 years have passed; how many are left?

Trapped in a world, stuck in a place that is so lonely at times that my hands can actually touch the loneliness as though it were yesterday's embrace of one who loved me...

Then suddenly and for a brief moment I find laughter and love, that gives me a newfound strength: a real friend. But it's a rare find that ends before its time because she must leave and I must stay. I try to occupy my time, occupy my mind and at times I do, but then things once again become monotonous and redundant.

The visits become few and far between. Did God not say, "If you visit one of these in prison it is the same as visiting me?" Do you remember who I am? I'm still here. Have you chosen to forget me or did you just get caught up in life? Is there anyone who has not forgotten me?

When I see the parole board will I be released or made to stay another 1, 5, or 10 years? It's the inevitable hope and the darkest fear of those who serve life... Does the parole board know that I would take it all back if I could? Does God not say that mercy rejoices against judgment? They'll ask me so many questions; will I have the right answers? They'll ask me how much time do I think is enough for a life? Do they know that I will go to my grave without paying enough time whether I'm inside or outside this fence?



Michelle Jones

How will they judge me? They weren't there through the abuse...Did they feel the pain of his fist? Do they feel my desperation or see my emotional scars? Did they hear him say, "If you leave me you'll be floating at the bottom of the river."? I would never see my kids again. Did they hear him say that he needed to get control of my mind again? That as long as I loved him he could do anything he wanted to me?

Do they know that ninety percent of women in prison for killing a man were abused by that man? Do they know that all of this is still trapped in my mind and if they could for a brief moment change places with me and know my life, feel my pain, regret and shame, they will look at me differently and let me go home?

Do I dare to hope?

## THE CRYING GIRL

*Sharon*

In a room full of shadows  
sits a girl  
in the farthest corner-  
darkest shadow

the girl sits in the corner  
alone, so very alone  
now she's all alone,  
she lets herself cry

She cries for all her pains and sorrows.  
She cries for the terrors in the night.  
She screams but nobody hears her.

She seem like a part of me.  
I feel all her pains and sorrows.  
I feel her terror; it chills me  
I can't help but wonder if  
anybody hears her crying  
I only have one more questions  
Who really is this crying girl?



CalvineWildPhotography

## **BURNOUT MY BROTHER:**

for Andrew Derek

*Constance*

I look up at the sky and ask God please tell me why  
you were taken from me before your time.  
I only wish I had more time to express this rhyme.

I don't care about all the money;  
I forgave you a long time ago, honey.  
I am consumed by the last memory about  
the day I pulled my car over and told you to get out.  
The moment I said you're no longer my brother  
guilt, anger, depression filled me. All I want is you to recover.

I will keep you close until the last star burns out.  
I can't wait to drive your truck while I do a  
burnout.

You will be with me forever over  
my heart in ink!  
Rest in Peace  
6.9.86 to 1.5.13  
I love you, brother.



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## VISIT

*Dena Hankerson*

Who knew, when I turned you around, after the next visit they'd be putting you in the ground? We never got a chance to do the things we said we would do, and now all I can do brother, is miss you. I was upset over something minute, not worth the time I wasted being mad; now it's too late to say I'm sorry. I keep wishing to relive these moments in my life that I just seem to blow if only I could know the results of my behaviors 20 minutes before... I wish I was more responsible acting; I wish I was more like you. I fought it so long. I talked about you being the nerd but the truth is your love I didn't deserve. You only wanted to shield me from some of life's pains, but I ran into trouble full speed. I have only myself to blame.

Who knew, when I turned you around, after the next visit they'd be putting you in the ground? I know after the forty years you were in my life, it would be bullshit if I said we never had a fight. Remember breaking mom's glass kitchen table as we wrestled and fell? She made us make up. This story I like to tell for it is the story of how family often disagrees, but at the end of the day, we were taught it was the world against you and me. Now I am all alone.

There is so much guilt I have-- turning you around that day, because you lived up here alone just so you could come visit me. Stupid diabetes killed you and the worst part is no one found your body for over a week. I see the maggots crawling, your body dissolving, your voice unable to call out for help--no one to hear...and it was me who turned you around after you faithfully visited me year after year.

Our mother didn't even bury you in the grave so one day I could physically say good-bye and I can't stop missing you no matter how much I try. Four years later my visiting staff automatically took you off my list. I was so upset for on that paper was your name, but when I calmed down I remembered in my heart they can't remove you for there you will always remain.

Who knew, when I turned you around, after the next visit they'd be putting you in the ground? We never got a chance to do the things we said we'd do, and now all I can do brother, is miss you. Thank you for the time we did share on this earth. Peace.



Stock Photo

## **CRY WOMAN CRY**

*Michelle Owens*

Cry woman, cry  
for the heart that is broken  
Cry woman, cry  
for the words that cannot be spoken

Cry woman, cry  
for the hungry babe in your hands  
Cry woman, cry  
for what no man can understand

Cry woman, cry  
for all the women in the nation  
Cry woman, cry  
for the ones living in silent desperation

Cry woman, cry  
for those who can't, or don't know how  
Cry woman, cry  
the time to change is NOW!

Stop crying woman; there's a new day ahead!  
You can make a difference with what you've said.



C. Fox



## TESTIMONY

*Beth Ann*

My name is Beth Ann and I am a cutter. I've been cutting myself for about 15 years now. Sometimes I cut myself where no one can see the cuts, but other times I cut myself where everyone can see the cuts because I'd like for just one person to notice me and ask me if I'm okay.

I've cut my face, arms, chest, breasts, stomach and legs. Some of the cuts did not leave any marks, but some did. I used to sit and look at all the marks on me and wonder, "Who can ever love someone who hurts herself like this?"

I know that I'm not alone. There are many of you out there who harm yourselves too. No maybe you don't cut, maybe you hit yourself or pull your hair out or make yourself sick, but I'm here to tell you that we (me and you) are all beautiful! We are all made in God's image. To Him we are all the most beautiful creation. Every day I look in the mirror and tell myself that I am worthy, I am loved and I am beautiful. No, it's not easy, but each day it does get a little easier. I can now see what God sees in me.

I'm asking each of you to look at yourself in the mirror and instead of seeing what you don't like, pick just one thing that you do like about yourself and focus on that. Each day repeat to yourself that one thing over and over again every time you see your reflection. In time, it will get easier. Remember God who created you, loves you!



Stock Art

## I AM BEAUTIFUL

*Stacy*

*I am beautiful*

because my affection is bold and demanding.  
My terseness speaks aloud  
to encourage the ones I love.

*I am beautiful*

when I give advice based on the things we share.

If it's joy I lead with happiness.

If it's grief I speak with grace.

If it's encouragement I speak with my heart and say what needs to be said.

If it's failure I speak to lift you up.

*I am beautiful*

when I speak from my life stories  
knowing my testimony shows  
God's glory.



CalvinWildPhotography

## TERRIFYING LOVE

Carla Sue Bradley Enloe

My greatest failure, the taking of a human life, brought about my greatest success, the reclaiming of my own soul. After the revolver went off, I looked down at my own hand surprised to see that I was the one who pulled the trigger. The next thing I knew, I was handcuffed and sitting in the backseat of a detective's cruiser ending the last day of my freedom. I signed my life away. The judge doomed me to serve eighty-five percent of a forty year sentence. Since, I have discovered the true self that I had once covered up with my lies. I found I am in fact a worthy individual, one I am learning to honor and respect. My story is a sad account, *but it carries hope in its back pocket.*

The abuse I suffered at the hand of my ex-boyfriend was severe and frequent. I never knew when the next blow would come or why. My buttons were being pushed daily to the point where I felt as if my psyche were breaking into a million pieces, leading up to that fatal day. What had my life become; where was it headed? The impact of the situation smacked me square in the face. My breath caught as I tried to inhale the oxygen my body so desperately needed and tears began to freely fall from my eyes with the realization that the man who had just been towering over me was now laid out, crumpled on the living room floor with a look of horror forever implanted on his face.

There would be no more frantic calls to 911 pleading for help and no need for the Victims Protective Order (VPO) I had filed and received from the judge. What good had that piece of paper been anyway? I had hoped the police would help me; instead, they arrested me.

The cuffs snapped around my wrists with firm finality. When the officers walked in and the questioning began, my words were soon twisted by the investigating detectives. It did not take long to realize I needed legal assistance; unfortunately, it was a necessity I knew I could not afford. I could not, however, fight this on my own. A public defender was assigned to my case. I soon came to understand why some call them the "Public Pretenders". The defense team worked diligently to convince me that everything would be all right, and I was thinking they were working with the District Attorney to get the charges dropped down to either self-defense or justifiable homicide. Instead, the attorney was plea-bargaining to Murder II.

On October 15, 2004, I stood in front of the judge for the first and only time. When he passed his judgment, the reality of the situation overwhelmed me. Scattered thoughts raced through my mind. I would not be able to care for my daughter, or see her graduate. I would not be there for my parents as they began to age. Life as I knew it was over. In a moment of sickening revelation, it hit me with the force of a semi: I had ruined my life and my daughter's.



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Once behind razor wire, new options and opportunities arose. I signed up for and participated in a Domestic Violence and Managing Emotions class. I discovered I was not alone, and that I am not who the court system says I am.

I had always wanted to go back to college, but never had the time or money. The college coordinator came to the chapel one day to promote the college program at Mabel Bassett Correctional Center. He told me that if I truly wanted to attend college, he would help me find a way to finance my education through sponsors. Seventh Day Adventist Church now sponsors me, paying for my tuition and books. After all the pain I have endured and the shame I have heaped upon myself, I can now walk with my head held high. It took all of that negativity to find a positive perspective on myself and in my life.

Life as I knew it ended the day I pulled the trigger. At the time, I did not know that it also marked the beginning of a new, different life--one full of promise for a brighter future. Many wonderful truths have revealed themselves to me in the years I have been incarcerated. The most beautiful of these is that I am worthy of the good life has to offer. Moreover, I see new possibilities for me thanks to the education that I am pursuing. I can now pull hope out of my back pocket and remember that tomorrow is not lost.



## TIME STRETCHES ON

*Nicole*

Time stretches on forever  
too slow, too fast  
not enough, too much  
relative to your mood,  
to your life  
to everything.

Years go by and do I even remember them?  
This year takes too long to go by  
and I can't forget it.

In my mind, time spins my thoughts  
into a tornado  
wreaking havoc on my peace of mind  
my stillness  
my center.

When the storm is over, where will I be?  
What pieces will be salvageable?  
What will need to be rebuilt?

Will my mental landscape even be  
recognizable as me?

With each breath, I try to remain  
calm, confident, able  
but the storm rages on inside me.

With each moment it could grow stronger  
or disappear completely.  
Which will it be?



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PAST PAIN: Now I'm Singin' in the Rain

*Tiffany*

My dad always told me to be good and keep a job  
instead I became a junkie slob.  
My kids should have been more important than my habit,  
but the needle was all I wanted—I just had to have it.

I couldn't keep on going like I was  
I'd be so numb my brain filled with fuzz.  
Words could not express my loneliness and confusion  
My fear has dissipated now that I have grasped a solution.

I cannot change those things I've done,  
but from my past I can run.  
I will run away from drugs  
and instead I will embrace my family with hugs.

I am blessed to have my children back in my life  
and excited to soon become a wife.  
I want to be close to my family so bad  
now I realize that they are all I ever really needed to have.

I have all I need from earth and above,  
plus I am being showered with love.



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DOWNWARD SPIRAL

*Melisa*

How can one be surrounded by so many people, yet feel so lonely?  
Abandoned and discarded by everyone from the streets...  
If only someone could have told me.  
It is so hard to stay positive in a negative world.  
It is even harder because I have lost all contact with my boy and my girl.  
Mondays through Sundays are one and the same, blurring together...  
Where will I go from here, only time will tell...  
I sure hope for my spot in heaven  
because I've already experienced enough of hell.



## DREADLOCKS

*Dena Hankerson*

It's a lifestyle not a hairstyle so stop asking me How do you get your hair like that? In the beginning, I moved closer and said, One day at a time. Of course people did not catch my quick comeback associated with A.A., N.A., G.A, S.A. and all the other A's. How do I say I looked into the bathroom mirror and was terrified?

I put my left hand up to the glass and traced the outline of the icon facing me. ME? This could not be me! I twisted the sink handle, scooped some water on my face, revisited the mirror in dis-belief. Cupping more water I splashed the mirror; I wanted to wash away this person. Immediately fog clouded the image. As the water trickled down slower than I expected, my face came into view distorted, sideways, elongated. Carnival trick mirrors? Must be...

I stare into my then hollow eyes and can't even cry. My body is so dehydrated, I haven't peed in three days. I have not eaten anything, digesting only coke, crack cocaine. My skin is pale and pasty. Desolate and desperate to change the picture I stand face to face with, I grab a pair of sewing scissors and begin to cut what once was shoulder length hair. I chop off snips here, and a handful there. Hair is associated with a woman's crown of glory. There is no glory in being bitter and a crackhead. So I cut, cut, cut. Then the tears fall.

It's a lifestyle, not a hair style. So, stop asking me how long it would take for your hair to look like mine. Five years ago, I would lean forward if sitting, move closer if standing, breathe out deliberately and say time varies from person to person. Mentally, I was daring someone to take inventory of the wrinkles on my forehead, each crease a time line. I wondered if they could see the lines caused from my lips twitching side to side; that was my mouth that night in the mirror.

Banging the sink counter that night, wanting my course in life to change, I tried to convince the Dove soap, hoarsely saying Not right...not right over and over. I was no longer talking about hollow eyes in the mirror image, and though it wasn't right--nine inches of hair scattered on my bathroom tile--I was talking about the fact that I'd decapitated about sixty plastic dolls looking for the secret microphones in their heads.



Stock Photo

I walked into the kitchen to unplug appliances because the hum of the refrigerator, the cla\*chu from the ice dropping, the silence from the toaster that wanted to pop all made me think S.W.A.T. would be propelling through my window, coming out from my vent ducts. Agents were always watching me, listening to me, following me in my car, trying to get me.

The landlord was also involved in this great plot to get me. Always coming around, "Do you need this fixed? How's that working?"

"Why?" I wanted to know. I wanted to see if he would admit he had wired my apartment and feared he'd crossed wrong circuits. He only smiled saying "Keep me posted that everything is okay or not. You keep me posted."

I could not take in more of the damage I'd done to the living room, so I went back into the bathroom, looked back into the mirror. Why did you do your hair like that? It was fucked up like the rest of my life. Then it hit me, Dreadlocks. I needed a lifestyle change not a hair style.

I held the tears that night. I rubber banded, twisted and set a pattern, parting four sections of my hair. I marveled at the idea of locks. My mind was locked up when I first believed I was a failure. "UNs" were what I consistently and continually did. I had jobs I liked but got fired from. I stayed in positions for years and was miserable. There were jobs I stole from, learning to reset the till even, so I could get high. There were jobs that stole my energy and time. UN-employed I was most times.

I lit a Newport 100. Inhaled. It wasn't so bad looking into the mirror. I was only incomplete. I rubber banded another section. How long did it take to get mentally locked up? I moved closer to the mirror spotting a dent in my forehead, only noticeable if pointed out.

More failures came to mind...MEN. There was the patient doting husband who died leaving me a widow at age twenty-six. The cute, intelligent one I liked but he didn't pay me enough attention. Sure I was good company and great sex but why would the doctor commit to me? Ugly men, I'm talking alcoholics, domestic violence candidates and cheaters gravitated my way. They came to my job waiting, leaning on broke down beaters like princes chasing me. My selection became even more lame as my addiction progressed, so I choose to use men for sex. I had my own money. Boy-toys. UN-married I was now.

Can I get my hair like that? Leave me the f u c k alone! I step quickly and closer to the person to stress my meaning. To get your own hair like this all you have to do is start renting your apartment to dope fiends, puking and shooting up as you sit on a toilet. Rent out your car for a three day weekend in exchange for a one day fix. Get real busy with the four W's and then there won't be time to comb or brush your hair: Who has the good stuff, What's been laced with it, Where can you meet to get some, When will this ever stop.

After the W's are the four C's: Copping it without arrest. Chopping it and distributing to all the financial distributors making you wonder if it was worth it in the first place. There's Cooking it if you aren't smart enough to get ready rock, and last is Crying. This can be done with or without an audience.

So, stop using my dreads as an easy way to initiate conversation with me because otherwise we would not have anything to discuss. I don't have any explanation as to why I choose to not perm, press, weave my hair. I am not the Guru of hair, the braid style mafia, a beautician or a barber. My dreads are not a hair style. They are my life style. They represent a new me, drug free.



Linda Haack

## LIFE

*Melissa*

Life--can you feel it? Can you breathe it? Can you see it? Only in moments. Moments that overtake us and bring us to our knees. That is when we know that we do not have control--or do we?

We are taught all our lives to be in control and be normal. Can anyone tell me what normal is? You have your version and someone else has theirs. It doesn't make you right and them wrong, or vice versa. Where do we find the answers? Look deep inside your soul; dig up every dead thing that has ever happened and let God take it. Become new. Become the person you were meant to be before your innocence was stolen from you by someone who was supposed to take care of you.

How, then, do we go forward? For me, it took fifty years to clean out the skeletons and let go--forgive, move on, start fresh. How do you do that at fifty? Doesn't seem fair, does it?

Life is not fair, nor does it promise us eternal bliss.

Let go; give it to God and the rest of your life you will have an eternal friend walking with you...  
or carrying you.

## A MOTHER'S REQUEST

*Donna*

Please forgive me my child  
for the nights you went to bed hungry  
the days you went to school with dirty clothes on your back  
for the cold at night that wouldn't let you sleep  
the days you were sick and I had no money for your medicine  
but I had money for drugs.

I apologize for what I did and didn't do  
for failing in every way to nurture you  
for never giving, but always taking

But most of all,  
forgive me  
for the addiction you now have  
because of me failing you.  
Please forgive me my child.



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## CALL YOU DADDY?!

*Krystal Sade*

What makes you think you deserve to be called Daddy when you haven't been there for me? What makes things change after all these years of broken promises and crocodile tears? What makes it right when you neglect your seed, lie to their faces and live happily free???

How does it feel to want something and not get it when your dreams are crushed and I'm the one who did it? What goes through your mind when you sleep at night not knowing that your child is out of sight? What happens when she doesn't want to see your face 'cause you're a sorry excuse and a daddy disgrace???

Call you Daddy? Maybe if you acted like one, you wouldn't have to tell me that, but my Mom is my Dad; she keeps everything intact. All I ever wanted was to be loved. Instead you took me for granted and put me second to drugs...As a little girl I didn't know the meaning of hate;

I just couldn't understand how you neglect someone you helped make...it might not be too late to get it all together, have a change of heart and make it all better. I know you're regretful and your heart is oh so heavy...you look forward to the day when I will call you Daddy..

BABY GIRL: Pregnant in Prison

*Tracy*

After I got locked up, I found out that I'd be blessed with you.  
I know this will be a struggle; with God I'll do the best that I can do.

Fear and apprehension filled me as thoughts raced through my mind.  
How was I going to deal with this at such a trying time?  
The plan was I'd be out of here before you would come along.  
Turns out you'll be out before I will and I'll have to be strong.

It'll be hard to hand you over, my precious baby girl;  
but I'll be out before you know it and I'll give you the world.  
This is just a stepping stone to all the places we will go.  
I promise to protect and love you more than you may ever know.

A GREATER LOVE

to my children

*Chikita*

I need you to open your heart.  
You must try to understand,  
my troubles are not your troubles;  
my journey is part of my Lord's plan.

I've travelled the paths of destruction.  
Now I need to humble down.  
The words I am about to speak,  
I pray help you find what I've found.

Today, I've found a peace within,  
a love unlike my own,  
you're my babies and I love you.  
Once embryos now fully grown.

Bear with me for I speak str-8 to you from a mother's heart:  
I am not turning my back on you girls,  
but getting you to Heaven is a journey  
only you can start.



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POEM FOR AMIRA

*Cynthia*

A beautiful girl in seventh grade  
who God brought to earth heaven made.

She is a smart young lady, you see,  
who is a lot like me...  
being careful of life's choices;  
listening only to the angels' voices.

Never let anyone turn you away.  
Maybe I'll be like you someday.

MY LITTLE GIRL:  
to my beautiful daughter, Keisha  
*Angie*

What a blessing you are to me.  
I cannot believe what I see.

My little girl is no longer a child  
and I've missed it all being wild.

The drugs I used changed my whole life--  
brought so much heartache, so much strife.

I miss you more than words could say;  
I think about you every single day.

I know you're going through a bad stage,  
but baby girl, please stop trying to be older than your age.

I don't ever want you to go through what I've been through;  
I want to help you but am unsure what to do.

I lift my arms and spread them wide  
and pray to God--He will be your guide.



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## THE DEVIL'S HELPER

*Mandy*

I walked in darkness feeling nothing but fear.  
Dark clouds filled my head.  
My worst nightmare came alive--  
My soul was certainly dead.

Satan had me in his trap.  
He held on so tight I couldn't break free.  
Sorrow filled my heart like never before--  
No escape; Satan had closed every door.

The Devil lied to me, you see.  
He said take my hand and I'll set you free.  
I fell for his trick--it all began with a prick,  
an instant healer flowing through my veins--  
the Devil's Helper made me a slave.

I stole for him.  
I lied for him.  
I risked my life for him.  
Don't be fooled by looks--  
the Devil makes sin look pleasurable, his tricks immeasurable.

He used heroin to destroy my soul;  
The more I used, the more my heart turned black as coal.  
I beg you to listen to me please--  
don't let the Devil's Helper trap you;  
if you do your soul will never again be at ease.



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## MY TESTIMONY: My Life in Prison

*Mellody*

I came to prison in April, 2011 for making bad choices. I lost my mom in 2010 and I could not deal with her passing because I never got to say goodbye. I didn't care what happened to me. I started getting high and cashing bad checks. I stopped taking care of myself. I went from 130 pounds to 93 in less than six months. I wanted to die.

At first in prison, I still didn't care who I was. A friend asked me to go to a Kairos.\* She told me it had something to do with God. I said no. She did not take "no" for an answer until I finally went.

I have never felt so much love as I felt with these women; they showed me how to love again. Thanks to the women in Kairos I was baptized six months later. I was saved May, 5, 2012. The four-day weekend of Kairos showed me how to live life again with God. He is so awesome in my life.

A year later, on the same day of my mother's passing, my grandson was born. God gave me a sign that my mom loves me and that I will be okay. I am a beautiful person in God's eyes.



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\**Kairos Inside* is composed of organized and trained volunteer teams of men and women from the communities surrounding an institution who present a 3-day weekend described as a short course in Christianity. The inter-denominational team of volunteers is made up of both clergy and laypersons.

## AS A CHILD

*Barbara*

As a child I was born to a king  
and I had all the royalties  
that being a child born to a king  
could bring...  
Like laughing for hours; I couldn't stop.  
Like listening to the King of the whole world talk.

It was time for a celebration  
Celebrate joy!  
Celebrate love!  
Celebrate No more wars!

While I was disobedient,  
I fell against my father's will  
So I was stuck up by Rulers of Darkness  
that never wanted me to enter  
my Father's kingdom again.

I became blind.  
I fell to my knees as a twelve-year old child.  
I looked up above the sky--  
Heaven fell down,  
and it saved me.



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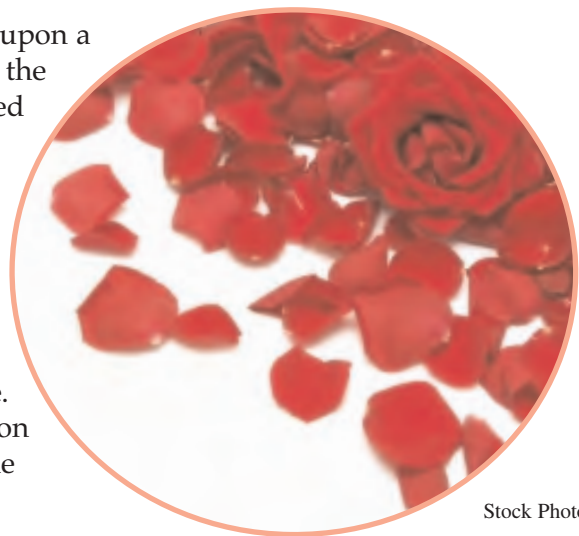
## THE ROSE

*Muriel*

I once was a rose, vibrant, beautiful, full of life and color. Everyone adored me. My petals consisted of confidence, friendliness, charm, loyalty, honesty and kindness. They were strong and intact. I loved life. I looked forward to blooming each morning and greeting the sun with thankfulness.

Then I met him. He said he'd be my gardener. He adored me at first, treated me with tender care, handled me with affection and love. He couldn't take his eyes off me. He touched my petals softly, delicately. He was sensitive to the arrangement of my petals, how they were layered and how they complemented and overlapped each other. He provided the deep, rich soil necessary for me to sustain my growth and beauty.

Then one day he decided to take a stroll and came upon a bed of tulips. He picked one. It was different from the rose. The stems were longer; its bell shape fascinated him. The gardener started spending more time with the tulip. Little by little, his love, adoration and affection for me diminished. I felt the effect of his neglect and my petals began to wither and drop one by one. My gorgeous deep red color began to fade. The gardener looked at me with hatred and disgust. He stepped on me, but later he'd gather me up and smooth me out and apologize. He wanted the tulip but didn't want to lose me; soon this proved too exhausting and he chose to keep the tulip.



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He stopped watering me. I'd given him everything--my beauty, fragrance, love--there was nothing left. One day the gardener discovered that the tulip's leaves were not as green as he initially thought. The long stem that fascinated him wasn't very long after all; the tulip's bell shape was slightly lopsided. Just as I was beginning to get my color back, to put my torn petals back together, to survive on my own without him, he returned and I took him back.

For a while he loved me, adorned me, cared for me like before; however, he also would hurt me and then apologize. One day the gardener came upon some lilies planted along the roadside. I realized I would never be able to satisfy him. I wondered what was wrong with me and what was I missing that kept him in search of another flower. He would return from the lilies and hurt me some more. Then, in 2004, the gardener abused me for the last time. I fatally shot him and am serving twelve years for it.

Now, I have surrendered my life to Jesus Christ instead of surrendering it to the world of prison. As a result, God has opened myriad opportunities for me. I know now that I have a father in heaven who loves me unconditionally and nothing I'll ever do will separate me from that love. God's love has empowered me, sustained me, encouraged me and uplifted me. The word of God is my rich, deep soil. I am blooming with awareness of my worth, potential and future. Thanks be to God! He has renewed me.

from TWENTY-SIX YEARS  
*Whitney Kizart*

1.  
Hated by the mother of the sister  
I never knew  
the product of a cheating boyfriend  
and the neighborhood girl.  
Welcome!  
This is life--the beginning of yours.
2.  
The only girl  
amongst a group of boys  
Spoiled.  
That's what they called her--a daddy's girl.  
She would soon learn that  
good things must all come to  
an end.
4.  
Hot and lonely summer nights  
fueled with cocaine users  
gunshots and cockroaches  
It's the projects--this is your home.
5.  
Bang! Car crash.  
He's dead! What?! Dead.  
A life so shortly lived, over in an instant  
Funeral—nightmares for days.
6.  
Days with Big Momma and syrup sand-  
wiches,  
Montell Williams and moth balls.  
Beating with belts  
bitches and hoes  
But Daddy, I'm a girl, too!
8.  
Mirror, mirror on the wall,  
who is this girl that lost it all?  
who once knew she was so loved,  
now whose heart hurts and has become  
blue.
9.  
"Whitney, your Daddy is not answering."  
Birthday passed  
Christmas--no Dad  
I thought he loved me.  
Love don't live here anymore.

What I've learned:  
it loves  
it lives  
and then it leaves.

13.  
"Shh! Don't tell nobody"  
Virginity taken away--  
innocence fades in the daze of that night  
wake up with the light bright of my soul;  
went to sleep with everything stolen  
clouds of shame cover what is no mo'
23.  
Transformed by Your love  
sheltered from the world's  
malice  
hurt  
and pain  
Beep, beep, beep  
saved,  
cleansed,  
made new by the precious blood of the lamb.  
She's back--her innocence redeemed.
25.  
I'm here--a woman, young and beautiful--  
beauty from within.  
"If you don't stand for something  
you'll fall for anything."
- I stand.  
I stand firm in Him.
26.  
It's your time  
days filled with anticipation  
littered with obligations  
  
The sun has dawned,  
it's a new day, and  
she is riding on.



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## INSIDE A VICTIM'S EYES

*Ashley*

The truth will set you free, but first it may make you miserable. Life growing up was no joke at the age of 6 watching my dad beat my mom. When I tried to tell him to stop, he would beat me too. It was going on for three years straight.

Then the sexual abuse started--my dad touching my sister and me. I never told anyone because that was my father and I thought that was normal. I was in school with teachers asking me, "Why are you always down? Why are you not participating?"

I always said, "I'm okay," knowing I was in the worst pain possible, miserable on the inside, but laughing and giggling on the outside.

My mom left my dad and he moved into his own place. I would go visit him. My brother and my dad would touch me. He would make me have sex with my brother while he would watch. Mind you, I was 9 at the time.

Then I went back home from that scary event every weekend. Sundays made me the happiest until one day I told my older sister he was still doing it. She got sick of the nasty and sick things he did. She told my mom and my sister and I were in Social Services until I was twelve and she was eighteen. I still denied it. Even though I didn't say anything, they had DNA. My older sister testified against him, so he went down for sexual assault 4 counts.

When I got to go home, I started to play ball, going to the park and participating in activities when I was 13. I was a leader until one day I was on my way home. I lived right across from the field. I got grabbed and gang raped by six men. That was when I changed my sexual preferences. Never did I want to look at a man or give them even one conversation.

By age 15, I was on a varsity basketball team and staying to myself. On top of all this hurt, my mother was on drugs. We moved to St. Cloud and I started selling drugs, fighting and stayed suspended.

I ended up in a JDC and was there for two years, but I got my diploma. After I got out I spent a year and a half in college, but I just could not stay out of trouble. So much hurt I had been through. I felt nobody wanted to listen. My higher power knew what I was going through even when my dad and brother did those things. I still love them and they will always remain in my prayers. I have a strong faith also because my mother has been sober for six years. So, no matter how big of a problem you have, Jesus has been through more than a lot.

*The truth will set you free,  
but first it will make you miserable.*

## THE LIFE CHOSEN FOR ME

*Judy*

I am beautiful; I am me.  
This is not the life that God has chosen for me.  
I went down the path that Satan glazed,  
and I smoked the meth that he gave me for days.  
30 months ago he tried again;  
that's when I stood up and said...  
"This is the end. Satan, you have misled me for the last time."  
Now here I sit again for a misled crime.

When I get out I want you to know, I am truly beautiful.  
God told me so.  
So Satan, just because you have fallen from grace and  
now you have given us meth to ruin our teeth and mess up our face,  
I say to thee...  
"You'll never take the Lord's place."  
Because when I get out again, I will be in the right place where God has put me.

For I am beautiful, yes indeed, because Jesus died to save me  
from you and your demon seed.  
God has chosen a better life  
just for me.



Judy Brown Wolf

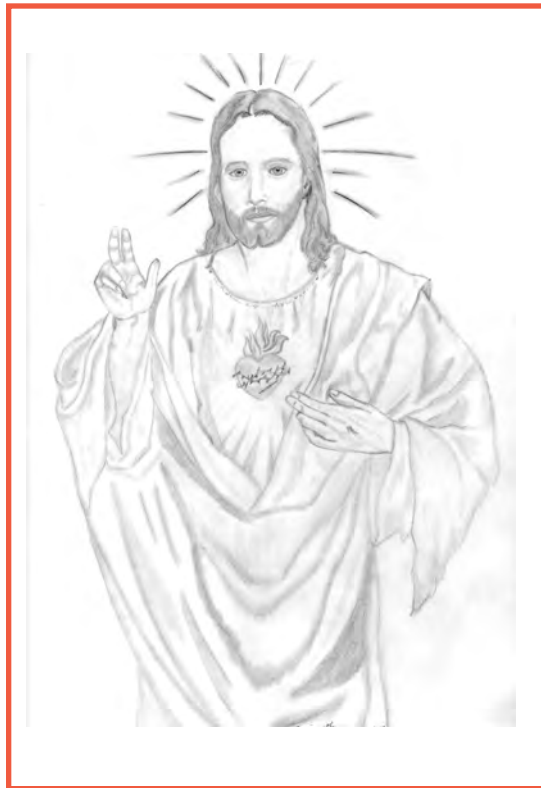
## DYING TO LOVE YOU

Lauren

Burning remorse explodes  
into raging fire  
Scorned by a guilt-stricken life  
Imploding my hardened heart's desire  
Blaze first lit by a liar--  
one tempting me from  
Him.

Truth is found in His love  
embraced from within.  
His scars and loving arms  
return me home once again--  
keep me safe from my sin.

Thank you, Lord Jesus,  
forever and ever, Amen.



InmateArt-Anonymous

## I FORGOT

*Paula*

How does it feel to kiss and hug your loved ones  
without being told once now and once when they leave?  
How does it feel to tuck your children in at night  
and to say good night and sweet dreams little ones?  
*I forgot how...*

How does it feel to take long walks under the stars  
and not hear the yard is closed; time to go?  
How does it feel to go to the kitchen and get what you want?  
*I forgot how...*

How does it feel to sit out and watch the sun set over the hills  
instead of looking out a window with bars?  
How does it feel to get into a car and take a ride  
without handcuffs to bind you down?  
*I forgot how...*

How does it feel to sit out on the porch and feel, smell watch the rain fall down?  
How does it feel to sleep out under the stars or to climb the highest mountain?  
*I forgot how...*

How does it feel to laugh and have fun  
without hearing shut up or you'll lock down for the night?  
How does it feel to give to a friend or just someone in need  
and not hear you can't do that; throw it away or get a write up?  
*I forgot how...*

Can you tell me all this  
because through the years  
*I forgot.*



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## I AM RESPONSIBLE

*Von*

I was sitting in “Growing Through Loss” class, looking around and five students in there I had either done time with their mothers or knew their mothers on the street. I sat there and when that realization came to me, I started crying uncontrollably. I couldn’t stop. I couldn’t get it off my mind that I was here in prison again, doing time with children that could be my children--children that I used to see pictures of from their mothers sharing letters and photos.

I could not get it out of my mind that these children in this room were the same children that I gave candy to to leave a room so I could sell their moms drugs or use drugs. I could not get over the fact that these children were telling stories that I contributed to. These were horror stories of being hungry, being left at home for days, being traded for sex--these children were products of my recklessness. I cried.

I cried every week; I had so much overwhelming--guilt--these children could easily have been my children. They are my children; it takes a village to raise a child and I failed at the most important job I have ever been given. I felt...responsible.  
I am responsible.



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## SHADOW OF FEAR

*Cynthia*

Yeah! I walk through the shadows of these halls  
listening to the echo within these walls  
a sad song of despair rings in our life in here  
nothing to look forward to – nothing but fear.

You see I have done an unlawful deed  
doing my time here making amends with God's speed.  
I try to mentor to the young and the old;  
they listen to the stories that I have told.

They fear responsibility of Adulthood  
keeping old ways of life as if they should.  
So stay away and teach your young  
not to be an inmate just because you were one.

I've almost done my time in this place,  
please listen to the adult that's in your face.  
Learn to be a lady and a citizen of no fear  
keeping your children out of here.

Yeah! I have walked out of the shadows of fear  
into the light to my family so dear.



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MAKING A BETTER ME:  
When I Came to the Light  
*Tarlene*

Today, I'm a new, different, better  
and happier person.

I'm a child of God, so when I  
gave my life to Christ I became  
a light for the world to see. I see  
myself through Christ's eyes.

I had some bad days living  
in the world, doing drugs, losing  
self-respect, losing  
my children and doing what the world  
"Done."

Through all the dark years I spent  
in the world when I came to the  
light it was the greatest thing that  
ever happened to me.

For me today is a life I never  
thought I would have, and that is a life.  
In spite of being in prison  
I have seen more light in my life  
than I could have ever imagined.

This is the beginning  
of a new journey for me.



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## CLEAN SLATE

*Tina*

Daddy's little kitty, my hero kept me safe  
from the tauntings of my brothers from which I dared escape.

Yes, he was my hero, so perfect in my eyes,  
yet he always managed to make my mother cry.  
He was an alcoholic who gambled all his pay  
that is why my mother said she couldn't stay.

We left when I was six years old; I did not understand  
how she could tear my heart out and rip me from his hands.  
I felt a tear inside my heart I thought would never mend  
this changed the way I viewed myself and my view of men.

Seeking out the ones I thought reminded me of him,  
thus I repeat a cycle of reckless abandonment.  
Pregnant when I'm just a kid, not so very old  
you made your bed; you lie in it: that's what I was told.

Thank God I got my G.E.D. so I could get a job  
because the husband that I chose-- his pride was unresolved.  
I cried and cried; I was too young and did not understand  
why he would drink and stay out late and would not be a man.

I stayed with him through thick and thin for almost twenty years.  
I gave up all the dreams I had; I traded them for tears.  
I finally felt I'd had enough and broke free from this pain;  
unprepared to face myself, I tried to live again.

Running wild I'm finally free but then what did I do?  
I found someone who's just like him and drugs were introduced.  
Lost all control, I spiraled down; it came before I knew.  
Rock bottom led me to this place to start anew.

So let me say what came of this-- how prison saved my life  
I found out who I really am, the person deep inside.  
A quest to educate myself and learn about the world  
to fulfill the dreams I thought were lost, but now I have unfurled  
within my reach, incredibly real.

## CHANGE

*Tammy Boettier-Richardson*

Torn family, torn hearts, tears in my mother's eyes and disappointment in her voice...to know I am the cause of it all rips me apart inside. Before, it was all about me--my wants, needs, self-absorbed selfishness.

Then God showed me it wasn't just about me. He allowed everything in my life to be taken away--house, car, money, friends, job, family, Kevin my husband of ten years, and in death John my father, Nanee my grandmother, Keith my best friend, Duchess my dog--all were taken.



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God knew He had to do this so I would see that my life didn't just affect me, but also those I love and who love me. I needed to see the pain, grief, anger and hurt that I gave them. I cannot take it back, nor can I change it.

All I can do is ask forgiveness and say how sorry I am. Now in prison and with God on my side, and all He has done in my life, I'm changed!

I'm a changed person by the grace and mercy God has given me. God will restore our family, our lives and our love. I must remain humble, unselfish, and tell people about God's love and what He has done in my life. I apologize for all I ever have done and the future I promise will be nothing like the past. I love you guys.

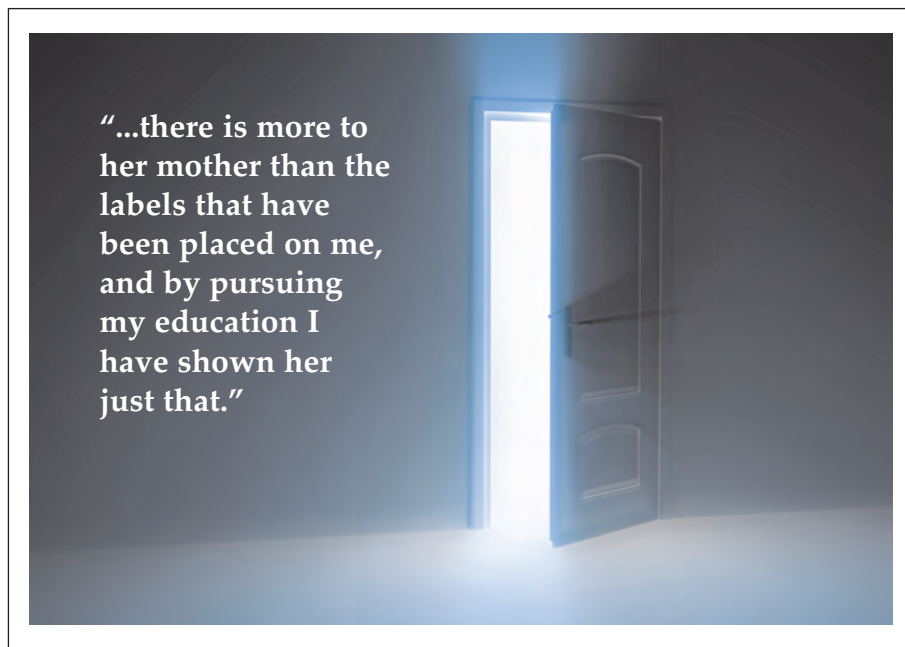


## VANISHING SHADOWS

*Carla Sue Bradley Enloe*

It would be a near impossibility to list all the lessons I have learned, and the knowledge I have gained as a result of my college education. Beyond the obvious academic growth, I have matured in more personal areas as well. My education continues to open new doors for me, even if only as possibilities and I find that I must re-evaluate not only myself, but also my goals and ambitions. More than anything, my college experience has taught me how capable I am and how empowered I can be. It is this lesson that I will always carry with me, long after I leave prison, for it allows me to be an example for myself, my family and for society as a whole...

...The biggest impact that my college experience has had on my relationship with my family; however, is that it has helped me to become a worthy example for my own daughter. She needs to know that there is more to her mother than the labels that have been placed on me, and by pursuing my education I have shown her just that. I have also shown her that anything is possible, and that something as simple as setting goals and making them happen can change one's life for the better. This is the type of example I want my daughter to have, and there are no words capable of expressing how thankful I am that...I have become a mother she can truly look up to and of whom she can be proud.



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## GOD GAVE ME YOU

*Angie*

I remember the day God put you in my life;  
I knew in my heart I was meant to be your wife.  
I put you through so much pain;  
I have no idea what I thought I would gain.

I pushed you away--put drugs first in my life;  
told you I could never be a good wife.  
I did everything I could to leave you alone;  
yet God kept whispering to me that I was wrong.

I was afraid 'cause I had been hurt,  
thought I wasn't worthy, felt lower than dirt.  
Now 16 years later, God gave me another start  
I'm here to tell you, honey, I promise to do my part.

I trust in God to show us the way;  
and thank you, Lord for giving us another day.



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## MIRROR

*Adriana*



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When I look in the mirror, I see a strong young woman with much to say, having been through hell most every day. She has made mistakes, but is learning to do better.

When I look in the mirror I see a beautiful young woman who is loyal and determined to make things right. She loves those close to her with all her might.

When I look in the mirror I see a trustworthy young woman who doesn't cheat or lie, who is going to make it in life. She will be successful and maybe even a wife.

When I look in the mirror I see a strong young woman who soon won't be sitting behind these cell doors: She is going to go far.

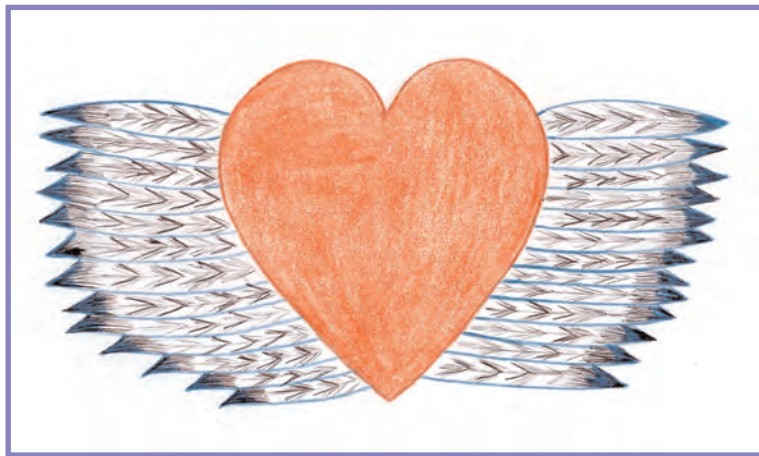
That is what I see  
when I look  
in the mirror.

## REMEMBER

*Michelle*

I remember the time we used to smile and play.  
I remember when you used to walk me to my door and I wanted you to stay.  
I remember when you were there when I got off work.  
Now all I remember is this hurt.

I still think about you day and night and wonder how I can make this right.  
We used to have fun and no one else mattered;  
now it seems my dreams have been shattered.  
All my thoughts are about you and no matter what we've been through  
I still love you.



## ECHOES

*Amanda Rose Clark*

Pamela Hostler

As my heart beats, as I weep, my mind still stands to grieve.  
I look past it and try to walk on with my eyes to the sky  
looking for an eagle to pass by.

I imagine being free like that eagle; only then do I hear echoes of my life.  
I grieve for the poison, the deadly injections of hurt, pain and loss--  
the echoes of this life.

I look to the eagle and pray he can lead me,  
for he is free--his spirit is free of poison, you see.  
I look to the eagle for guidance. His path and mine are similar.

This is very clear to me; his kind has been broken and taken,  
just like me he's outnumbered and lonely and still manages to be free  
as he keeps his echoes in the sky flying with pride.  
I pray as I watch him fly by.  
I only wish to be as the eagle flying with his pride,  
the indigenous Native Pride.

## LIFE IS NOT

*Lisa*

If only everyone could see past this shell of flesh we all possess  
into the individual bless that separates us from the rest,  
maybe then they would know that the pot of gold  
is not at the end of the rainbow, but deep within each soul...

Life is not about how much money one has got,  
who lives in a big house or beneath a bridge in a cardboard box.  
It's the empathy and the compassion to forgive,  
to share in hope, faith and love as we live...

Life is not about who won or lost the fight,  
who was wrong or who was right.  
It's the grace and mercy that God gives  
through His son's sacrifice that we shall forever live...

Our Creator gave us choice  
so that those who chose the truth will stand proud and raise their voices  
to share throughout the nations what God has said and done,  
that no one sheep or lamb goes lost  
but lives in eternity with the Father and the Son.



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## FROM THE SAME DEEP WELL

*Mary*

As I look back on choices I've made in my life  
waiting in darkness, searching for the light,  
I'm needed by others pulling at my heartstrings.  
I pray God grants me peace on angels' wings.

I will stand strong in my faith and walk my path.  
I've done all my crying; now it's time to laugh.  
Laughter and tears comes from the same deep well in the soul.  
I pray to find life's purpose before I'm too old.

They say "Every storm runs out of rain"  
just like every dark night turns to day.  
May you also weather the storm that rises up from the water.  
Let go, let God and give your heart and soul to the Father.

Keep your head above the water as not to drown  
I was once lost too, but through Christ I've been found  
So I write you these words for what it's worth  
In hopes that you, too, find God here on earth.



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## DO YOU KNOW HOW IT FEELS?

*Angela*

Do you know how it feels to love someone you hate so much?

to be raped and molested by someone you trusted

to lay down with a man that you really did not want to, but you did it anyway

Do you know how it feels to turn out like the person that you despised the most?

Do you know how it feels to be so scared but still not care?

to be told you are a failure when you thought you were doing your best

to have so much to say, but no one to listen

Do you know how it feels to wish you had a mama to just play in your hair?

Do you know how it feels to overcome and forgive?

to finally love and accept yourself for who you are

to tell all your secrets and set yourself free

Do you know how it feels to finally let go?

Do you know how it feels to be proud of the strong and beautiful lady who has overcome?



Stock Photo



## INVISIBLE WOMEN

*Geneva Phillips*

I am an invisible woman  
I haunt dim hallways  
of memory.

I sit alone  
on a hilltop  
under a barren tree  
in some dream you won't remember.

I am an invisible woman  
I stand in line  
with other invisible women  
we see each other—barely—  
but the world can't see us.

We walk side by side  
looking everywhere except at each other  
as if by force of will, omission or denial  
I can make you invisible  
as the world has made me

I am an invisible woman;  
We are invisible women.



Stock Photo



S. Browns

## NO EARTHLY DICTATIONS

*Chikita*

Yes, I've done wrong;  
I've sinned; I've made mistakes,  
but the many flaws I possess—they don't dictate.  
I may stumble at times; just might fall—  
doesn't even matter when on my savior I can call.

I am not perfect, but my creator is.  
The world has no clue, no earthly idea.  
Had they really known,  
they'd know His love is for real.  
No earthly dictations in a cold,  
callous world filled with suffering nations.

The time that I serve holds no title for my life  
yet I have a true love  
I am His daughter, sister, friend...  
I am his wife.



Stock Art

## SINS FORGIVEN

*Lisa*

My life was a turmoil, my thoughts all a mess, many sins I had committed that I could care less to confess. I've had so many problems from young to growing up. My life was spinning downward; I felt like giving up. I'd heard of this man Jesus, but I could not believe that he existed because who could forgive me--a simple sinner when that was my great success.

I found myself alone, on my knees. Crying I put my hands together and I asked the Lord to be my guide. A surge of peace then came over me--a divine love engulfed my soul. I then cried on, "Please forgive me, Lord. My pains you already know: I permitted hatred to rule my heart gave Satan legal ground.

Now I ask of you, Dear Jesus, please turn my life around. Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. Do not banish me from your presence and don't take your Holy Spirit from me." (Psalm 51:10-11)

Right then the heavens opened up my tears dried in my eyes. A weight was lifted off of me as Jesus knelt by my side. He said "Daughter, your sins are forgiven." (Mark 1:15) "Do not be afraid, only believe." (Mark 5:36) "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God also believe in me." (John 14:1)

As Jesus stood to walk away, he turned to me once more, He said, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more (John 8:11).



Pamela Hostler

## NEVER ALONE

*Denise*

Sometimes I struggle  
don't know where I belong  
but you hold me up  
and help me stay strong.

You are beside me  
all through my day  
and when I feel lost  
you show me the way.

When I am alone  
weeping silently at night  
I just need to remember  
you are my truth and my light.

## MY LIFE RESTORED

*Angela Blessing Delicino-Woods*

There was a hole...a void...a darkness in my soul.  
Years of abuse had taken their toll.  
I was alive and breathing, but felt dead inside.  
My emotions were mixed--my brain felt fried.  
No one heard my words that were so softly spoken,  
But one look into my eyes told that I was broken.  
I had no desires, no purpose, and least of all hope.  
It all disappeared with each shot of dope.

I felt so alone and could not find my way.  
I tried something new...I began to pray.  
I asked God to take my life and show me how to live.  
He said, "My child you are so precious and have so much to give.  
I had to make you humble to get a complete surrender.  
Now I will see you through--be your shelter and defender."  
God made Himself known to me in this time and place.  
He has wrapped me up in His love and His amazing grace.

Today, I am thirsty and starving for my Lord.  
He has given me purpose, hope--  
My life is restored.

## MY OWN PRISON

*Tracy*

The barbs and bricks are to keep you out; these bars are meant to keep me in.  
It gets really frustrating being a prisoner in my own skin.  
Between the bars I can look out.  
I think I see the light of day.  
Every time I think life is getting better, it all just seems to slip away.

Maybe I should just move on. Maybe I'm better off alone.  
I drift along like a gypsy always searching for my home.  
Once I find where I belong I will make a brand new start.  
I'll start removing barbs and bricks that for now protect my heart.

Maybe find someone to help me work through all my pain and sorrows.  
Someone who will stand by me to make a lifetime of happy tomorrows.



## GOD'S LOVE: My Testimony

*Amber*

Tracy Yennie

I never once thought my life would end up the way it did. I grew up with good parents who always gave my sisters and I food to eat, clothes to wear, and a warm home to sleep in every night. So, with that, I can't blame my old life and ways on how I was raised.

What I can do is tell you how much I love God today. Before, in my life I never would have said that. I thought God hated me and that's why my life was the way it was-- chaotic, empty, alone.

It was just the opposite. After three years in prison, I've realized just how much God's love for me really is. He wanted me to love myself--not hate myself. He took me from being a needle junkie on the street to living the life of a beautiful loving daughter of God. He loves me that much and all He wants to do is work miracles in our lives.



CalvinWildPhotography

## I LOVE YOU

*Michelle Owens*

You touch my face every night when I sleep.  
You touch my heart every moment of every day when I'm awake.  
You whisper in my ear and send chills down my spine.  
You inhabit my dreams and make my soul dance.

Since I've met You, I can't imagine my life without You.  
You are my everything, my all in all,  
my God,  
my Savior,  
my Redeemer  
and my Lord.

Every heartbeat expresses my love for You.  
Every word from my mouth is a testimony of Your truth and justice.  
no greater love have I ever known.

Man tried and all he could do was turn my head and give me momentary physical pleasure.  
But You,  
You turned my life completely around and gave me  
Joyful life  
in eternity  
with You.





Calvin Wild Photography

UNTITLED

*Jennifer*

Floating.  
Oblivious to all the warfare happening around me,  
they can't reach me--  
I am in a perpetual state of bliss.  
I'm not accustomed to this strange emotion.

I sit here in a moment of light  
a moment of clarity--  
watching the people fly by  
oblivious to the lost souls locked away.

I was once like them  
submerged in my consuming pain--  
believing that chaos and suffering would be all I ever know,  
but now my mind is clear and I see this truth for the first time  
I have purpose, and meaning  
and no one can take that away.

## A CALL TO ALL WOMEN

*Michelle Owens*

Women—  
realize the power and strength you have;  
realize the greatness you house inside of you.

Women—  
You conceive, bring forth and sustain life.  
You birth kings, scholars, Nobel Prize winners, pastors, presidents, leaders

Women—  
are teachers, nurturers, home keepers and protectors of their children:  
the boo-boo kissers, the chasers of monsters from under the bed, the bug jar-  
makers and comforters after bad dreams

You are the glue that holds families firm together--  
the pulse of the heart in the home.

Women—  
are there to help daughters transition into womanhood,  
and help their elders let go and move on to the hereafter with dignity.

Women—  
caused countries to be conquered and new worlds to be sought and discovered.

So...with all this greatness,  
why do we fight amongst ourselves and try to tear each other apart?

Ban together women—  
when we do we make mountains move and  
spur nations to change policies and laws.

No one person can move a mountain all at once,  
but we can move it with a little determination—  
one pebble at a time!

Women—  
love like no other,  
deeper than anyone can fathom and  
longer than life itself.



Beth Ann Brady

## REFLECTION

*Carrie*

As I sit and do my time I now realize that the people I called friends weren't really my friends. I said to myself as I was on my way to prison, they won't forget me, because I was always there for them. Well, I was very wrong.

But now that reality has hit me and I've had some alone time to think, I'm very blessed to be where I am today. I'm alive, safe and I'm not forgotten. Whenever you feel alone and like everyone has forgotten you, I want you to remember that's not true.

We're never alone because God said that He would never leave us. And surely if God greatly loves and remembers even the birds of the sky, why wouldn't he remember us?

We are loved, thought of and most of all, Beautiful!



Beth Ann Brady

## TESTIMONY

*Victoria*

I never believed that there was anybody out there who would understand me or where I was coming from. I am a survivor of child abuse, both physical and sexual. I grew up in foster care from the age of 11. I was in about 16 different foster homes before I reached age 18. I became hateful and rebellious with no outlet other than cutting on myself. This hate and rebellion festered inside of me.

As an adult, this only grew worse. I have now survived two marriages. I say survived because I was emotionally and physically abused. I am currently serving a five year sentence for possession of methamphetamines which will be completed on May 4, 2014.

I tried to commit suicide three times in less than four months because I felt that nobody cared about me and that I was alone. My family had turned their backs on me and where were all those "friends"?

I am very happy, pleased and proud to say that things have changed for me. During the past two years, I have met someone who has become my friend and He will never leave me. Thanks to several volunteers here I now have a relationship with Christ which grows every day. I now feel that love I had been looking for in all the wrong places. Even though at times I still feel the struggles of everyday prison life, I know now that I am not alone.

"Before the Testament, there's the test. Before the message there's a mess. Choose to live your life as a woman on purpose."



MY KING IS  
*Conswella*

The Bible says my King is a seven-way King:

1. King of the Jews--that's a racial King
2. King of Israel--that's a that's a national King
3. King of the Ages
4. King of Heaven
5. King of Righteousness
6. King of Glories
7. King of Kings

He is the Lord of Lords.

His promise is sure.

His mercy is everlasting.

That's my King.

Well, I wonder, do you know him?



Stock Photo

GEORGIA LOVES GOD...FOREVER  
*Georgia*

This particular storm is coming to a close.

I can smell the deliverance and freedom nearby.

The restraints and the oppression are loosening more and more each day.

Terror and ruined lives lay in my past.

They'll try and make me a part of them again.

I can't. I won't. I refuse...

to be conquered by this world's fake riches, treacherous inhabitants or my own flawed desires, thoughts and actions.

Now is my chance to live the meaning of

Loyal Servant, Friend and Child

because You have been overly loyal...

and generous

in creating me for so much more.

I'll never be able to repay. Never!!

So here...take my life;

I gladly and with relief give it to You,

My Lord.



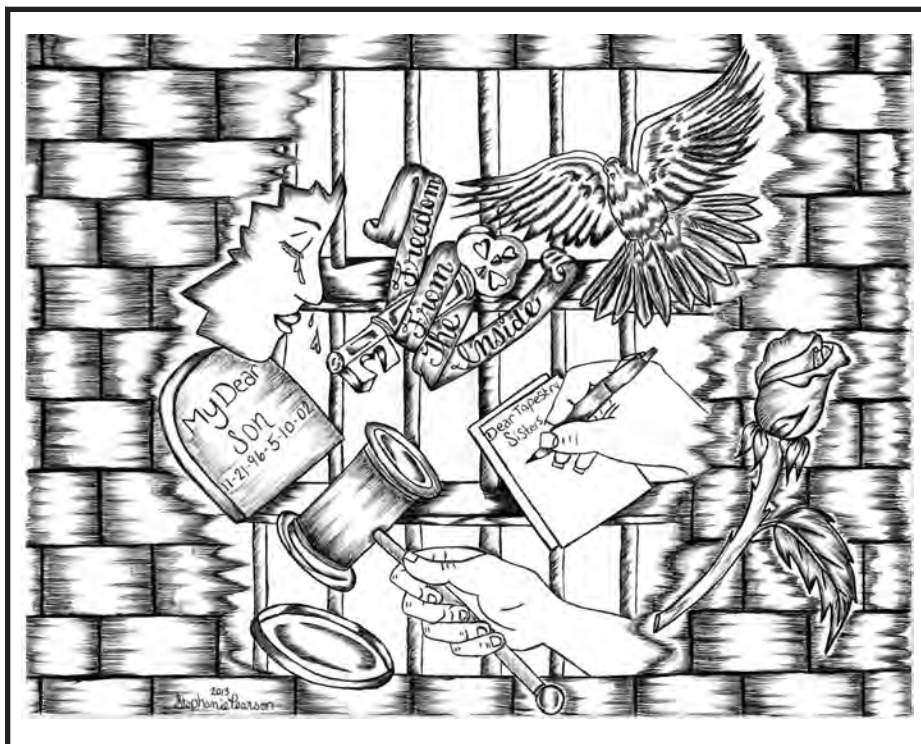
## MY SHOES

Stephanie

Allow me to tell you a story of the shoes I wear. My right shoe represents the dark, miserable Hell I come from. Abandoned by my mother, raped by my father, robbed of my childhood, I turned to drugs. Crack cocaine and heroin became my best friends. Nothing mattered--not even my children. I became like my mother choosing drugs over my own babies; trusting no one, hating everyone--especially me. In and out of programs, jails and prison for 20 years, I just couldn't get my small dim light to shine through.

Throughout my whole life, God has been by my side trying to show me the way. He blessed me with a gift beyond my dreams, a little boy who worshipped only the Lord above. I tried to juggle motherhood and addiction. Eleven years ago, my addiction won completely. I lost my son, just five years old, in a car crash caused by me. I'd like to say that was my bottom, but not then.

Today, Tapestry is saving my life. I choose to live today. I am going to let my best foot lead me--the real one. See, in that car crash, I also lost my right leg. I am cutting off my past, my addiction, my hell, just like drugs cut my leg off. That wasn't me anyhow. Now all that is left is the real me--bright and cheery with all my dreams and goals. That's what my left shoe represents. I am still a work in progress.



Stephanie Pearson

## HEAVEN'S GATES

*Stephanie*

Toss and turn, side to side  
deep inside me something's growing...  
I always smile; I have so much grace  
filled with light  
filled with God's Holy Spirit.

Put your hands together and pray;  
I bow my head to pray for my enemies.  
Take my hand and follow me...  
a party in heaven for eternity.

The angels come and take me away;  
they came to me in the midnight hour.  
My heart pounds at crazy notes  
as I stand with joy before  
Heaven's Gates.



Jennifer Malone

## Prison Tears

The eyes are the truth

The acceptance

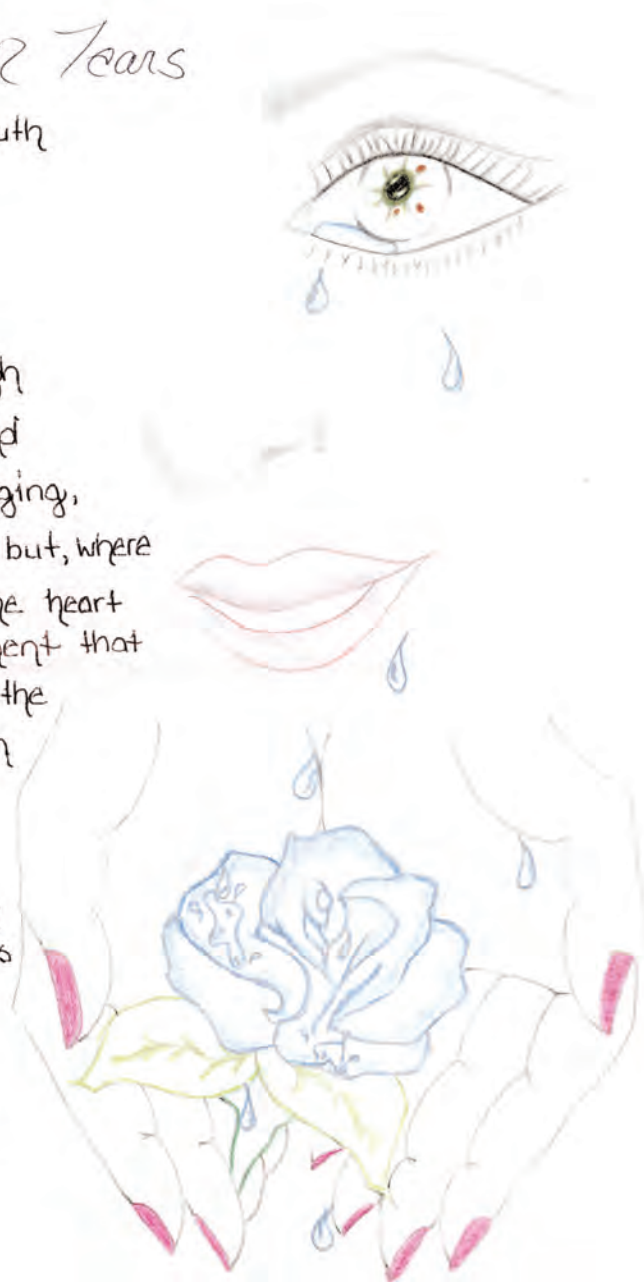
The release

Tears that flow through  
the sliver of time and  
reflections; Acknowledging,  
not only where we are but, where  
we have been. From the heart  
that lives in confinement that  
knows only despair to the  
heart that goes through  
the stitches; Learning  
how to care

To the hands of healing  
Flow the cleansing tears  
That brings forth a  
flower

Represented by a tear

Poem: Brenda Floyd



Art: Jodie Pruett



## Boundless Courage



I had to find the courage  
To see me through the day,  
And so I knelt in silence  
And began to softly pray.  
I felt His strength come flowing  
As my savior did His part  
To grant me boundless courage  
That would live within my heart ♡  
This courage has sustained me  
Through trials of pain and sorrow,  
And I can trust, believing  
He will see me through tomorrow.  
Amen.....



Pamela Hostler



# I Am Beautiful

A Survival Resource  
Created by and for Women

*"Life is a journey and a spiritual unfolding is its purpose."*



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